

## Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7916

INFO CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 10890

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, RP

SUBJECT: MARTIAL LAW'S SMILE SLIPS

1. SUMMARY: SECRETARY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE ENRILE HAS WARNED AGAINST SUBVERSION AND RETURN TO ANARCHY. HE STATED THAT IF CRITICAL SITUATION DEVELOPS, IT WILL NOT BE AS "BLOODLESS" AS IN SEPT 1972. DEFENSE CHIEF'S STATEMENT PROBABLY REFLECTS REGIME'S FRUSTRATION AT CONTINUING DETAINEE DISTURBANCES, ACTIVIST CLERGY'S SUPPORT FOR DETAINEES AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION'S CRITICISM OF GOP DETENTION POLICIES. SPEECH ALSO BETRAYS SOME ANXIETY ABOUT DETAINEE TRIALS PROMISED BY PRESIDENT MARCOS. ENRILE'S TOUGH SPEECH IS AT VARIANCE WITH CAREFULLY NURTURED IMAGE OF "SMILING MARTIAL LAW." IT RAISES QUESTION OF WHETHER REGIME'S HARD LINE RHETORIC MIGHT MOVE IT TOWARD INFLEXIBLE POSITIONS SO FAR SHREWDLY AVOIDED. END SUMMARY.

2. ON JULY 23, SECRETARY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE ENRILE TOLD 400 PARTICIPANTS (PRIMARILY POLICE AND MILITARY) IN FIRST NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON "STRATEGY TO REDUCE CRIMES," HE WAS CONCERNED BY EFFORTS OF CERTAIN GROUPS TO PROMOTE ANARCHY. IN TRANSPARENT REFERENCE TO CLERGY AND PERHAPS

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CRITICS SUCH AS SALONGA, DIOKNO, MACAPAGAL, ET AL, ENRILE

CRITICIZED THOSE WHO "BECAUSE OF THE PECULIARITY OF THE WORK THEY PERFORM IN OUR SOCIETY WERE GIVEN CERTAIN SPECIAL PRIVILEGES TO BE IMMUNE FROM ARREST WITHOUT OUR PERSONAL AUTHORIZATION." DND CHIEF SAID, "WE IN THE ARMED FORCES AND THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT PRAY THAT A CRITICAL SITUATION SHALL NOT BE REACHED ONCE AGAIN BECAUSE THE NEXT TIME AROUND, IT WOULD NOT BE AS BLOODLESS AS SEPTEMBER 21, 1972."

3. ENRILE'S SPEECH WHICH, AP REPORTED, "PROMISED A BLOODY REPRESSION" COMES AGAINST BACKGROUND OF (A) CONTINUING UNREST AT BICUTAN REHABILITATION CENTER; (B) PROBLEMS WITH CLERGY; (C) RECENTLY COMPLETED VISIT OF ICRC REPS, WHOSE FINDINGS ALLEGEDLY SUPPORT AI CHARGES OF DETAINEE TORTURE; AND (D) PREPARATIONS FOR MILITARY TRIBUNALS TO TRY LEADING POLITICAL PRISONERS AS PROMISED BY PRESIDENT MARCOS IN HIS JULY 20 PRESS CONFERENCE.

4. BICUTAN DISTURBANCES: SINCE JULY 9, PRESS HAS BEEN CARRYING REPORTS OF CLASHES BETWEEN DETAINEES AND AUTHORITIES AT BICUTAN REHABILITATION CENTER. AMRSP DETAINEES COMMITTEE SOURCE TOLD EMBOFF DISTURBANCES RESULT OF DETAINEES' UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT TO PREVENT FATHER EDICIO DE LA TORRE FROM BEING TRANSFERRED TO ANOTHER AREA OF THE CAMP. GOP CLAIMS HIS TRANSFER WAS PART OF EFFORT TO "DECONGEST" FACILITY. UNDERSECRETARY BARBERO HAD BEEN CONVINCED DE LA TORRE WAS RING LEADER IN FOMENTING RECENT HUNGER STRIKE AT CAMP. ENRILE MET WITH RELATIVES OF BICUTAN DETAINEES ON JULY 20 TO HEAR THEIR COMPLAINTS ABOUT DETAINEE MALTREATMENT. IN UNUSUAL COLUMN IN JULY 16 "BULLETIN TODAY" DISCUSSING BICUTAN DISTURBANCES, COLUMNIST APOLONIA BATALLA HAD SUGGESTED GOP ADOPT MORE LIBERAL INTERPRETATION OF NATIONAL SECURITY AND RELEASE ALL DETAINEES WHO WOULD NOT GO INTO HIDING OR TAKE UP ARMS AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT SINCE "THE POLITICAL PRISONERS LOOK LIKE SO MANY SKELETONS IN OUR CLOSETS." BATALLA'S JULY 23 COLUMN, HOWEVER, IS DEVOTED ENTIRELY TO LONG LETTER FROM SECDEF ENRILE CLAIMING DETAINEES HAD ATTACHED GUARDS, DAMAGED GOVERNMENT PROPERTY AND WERE INSPIRED BY COMMUNISTS. CONFIDENTIAL

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5. DIFFERENCES WITH CLERGY: IN JULY 14 PRESS RELEASE ON BICUTAN DISTURBANCES, DND CLAIMED THAT "TEN NUNS AND THREE CAUCASIAN MEN, PRESUMABLY PRIESTS" HAD ASSISTED DETAINEES IN THEIR STRUGGLE WITH GUARDS. ON JULY 18, PRESS REPORTED MEETING BETWEEN UNDERSECRETARY BARBERO AND A GROUP OF NUNS IN WHICH NUNS PROMISED TO COOPERATE WITH THE GOVERNMENT. BUT ON JULY 22, HEAD OF

ASSOCIATION OF MAJOR RELIGIOUS SUPERIORS OF THE PHILIPPINES/WOMEN, SISTER CHRISTINE TAN, PROTESTED GOP'S EFFORT TO MISLEAD PUBLIC INTO BELIEVING HER ORGANIZATION SUPPORTED REGIME. SHE GAVE AP COPY OF LETTER SHE SENT TO PRESIDENT MARCOS IN WHICH SHE LABELED MEETINGS WITH BARBERO AS "EXERCISE IN FUTILITY" AND SCORED "DELIBERATE EFFORT" TO MISLEAD PUBLIC AND MISREPRESENT POSITION OF HER ORGANIZATION.

6. ICRC VISIT: ICRC TEAM COMPOSED OF ANDRE PASQUIER AND JOHN LABA LEFT PHILIPPINES JULY 21 AFTER SIX WEEK VISIT. THEY DECLINED TO MEET WITH PRESS (AND EMBOFF) BUT REPORTEDLY THEIR FINDINGS CONFIRM SOME OF TORTURE ALLEGATIONS IN AI REPORT.

7. DETAINEE TRIALS: AS REPORTED IN MANILA 10621, MARCOS HAS COMMITTED HIMSELF TO HAVING ALL DETAINEES WITH CASES PENDING BEFORE MILITARY TRIBUNALS TRIED BEFORE FIRST WEEK OF AUGUST. GUIDED PRESS IN REPORTING PRESIDENT'S REMARKS SAID ONLY THAT TRIALS WOULD BE SOON. EMBASSY HEARD AQUINO CASE WILL BE REOPENED JULY 27 WITH AQUINO FACING SAME CHARGES AS BEFORE, I.E., COLLABORATION WITH NPA, AND ILLEGAL POSESSION OF FIREARMS AND ARMED ROBBERY. MARCOS IS ALSO COMMITTED TO TRYING LOPEZ AND OSMENA IN SAME TIME FRAME (BEFORE FIRST WEEK OF AUGUST) BUT SO FAR NO WORD OF THEIR CASE WHICH MIGHT ALSO INVOLVE AMCIT LEHMAN.

8. COMMENT: ENRILE'S SPEECH IS TOUGHEST PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENT BY TOP GOP OFFICIAL IN SOME TIME. INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, IT RECEIVED ONLY MODERATE ATTENTION IN JULY 23 PRESS. DND PRESS RELEASE (DND CLAIMS TEXT NOT AVAILABLE) ALSO OMITTS LANGUAGE ABOUT CONFIDENTIAL

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NEXT "CRITICAL SITUATION" NOT BEING AS "BLOODLESS" AS SEPTEMBER 21, 1972. ENRILE PROBABLY REFLECTS HIGH LEVEL IRRITATION AND FRUSTRATION AT (AL CONTINUING RESISTANCE FROM DETAINEES, DESPITE REGIME EFFORTS TO ACCOMMODATE SOME OF THEIR DEMANDS; (B) ACTIVIST CLERGY'S SUPPORT FOR DETAINEES AND DISINCLINATION TO COOPERATE WITH REGIME; (C) INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS' (AI AND ICRC) PUTATIVE SUPPORT FOR DISSIDENTS BY EMPHASIZING FAILINGS OF GOP'S DETANTION SYSTEM, PARTICULARLY TORTURE. ENRILE'S REMARKS ALSO BETRAY ANXIETY ABOUT DETAINEE TRIALS MARCOS PROMISED. AQUINO MADE REGIME LOOK FOOLISH ON TWO OCCASIONS HE APPEARED BEFORE MILITARY TRIBUNALS (1973 AND 1975) AND AUTHORITIES ARE UNDERSTANDABLY WARY OF RERUN. AQUINO AS WELL AS LOPEZ/OSMENA (IF TRIED AT

SAME TIME) WILL BE MAGNETS FOR FOREIGN PRESS WHICH ALSO  
MAKES REGIME NERVOUS. ASIDE FROM DAMAGE IT DOES TO  
CAREFULLY NURTURED IMAGE OF "SMILING MARTIAL LAW," ENRILE  
SPEECH RAISES QUESTION OF WHETHER REGIME'S REHTORIC  
MIGHT MOVE IT TOWARD INFLEXIBLE POSITIONS HITHERTO  
SHREWDLY AVOIDED.  
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